

68 374. W V
CHRIST the Light of the World ; Or,
The Principal Improvements made in
Religion by CHRISTIANITY.

Represented in a

S E R M O N

PREACHED at the

Young Men's Lecture

A T

E X O N,

THURSDAY, September 11, 1735.

By THOMAS AMORY.

Published at the REQUEST of the Young
GENTLEMEN, and of a great Number of MINI-
STERS present.

Δειν γὰρ — τον βελτιστον των Ανδροπινων Λογων λαβοντα και
δυσεξελεγκτοτατον επι της οχημενον, ωσπερ επι σχεδιας
κινδυνευοντα διαπλευσαι τον βιον· ει μη τις δυναίτο και
ακινδυνότερον επι βεβαιότερη Οχηματῆς η ΛΟΓΟΥ ΘΕΙΟΥ
ΤΙΝΟΣ διαπορευθῆναι. Cebes in Plat. Phadore, § 234

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. HETT at the Bible and Crown, and
J. GRAY at the Cross Keys, in the Poultry. 1735.

[Price Six-Pence.]

Christ the Light of the World : Or
The Principal Doctrines made in
Religion CHRISTIANITY.

Revised Edition

S E R M O N

Preached at the

Young Men's Meeting



1847
1848
1849
1850
1851
1852
1853
1854
1855
1856
1857
1858
1859
1860
1861
1862
1863
1864
1865
1866
1867
1868
1869
1870
1871
1872
1873
1874
1875
1876
1877
1878
1879
1880
1881
1882
1883
1884
1885
1886
1887
1888
1889
1890
1891
1892
1893
1894
1895
1896
1897
1898
1899
1900
1901
1902
1903
1904
1905
1906
1907
1908
1909
1910
1911
1912
1913
1914
1915
1916
1917
1918
1919
1920
1921
1922
1923
1924
1925
1926
1927
1928
1929
1930
1931
1932
1933
1934
1935
1936
1937
1938
1939
1940
1941
1942
1943
1944
1945
1946
1947
1948
1949
1950
1951
1952
1953
1954
1955
1956
1957
1958
1959
1960
1961
1962
1963
1964
1965
1966
1967
1968
1969
1970
1971
1972
1973
1974
1975
1976
1977
1978
1979
1980
1981
1982
1983
1984
1985
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
1991
1992
1993
1994
1995
1996
1997
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025
2026
2027
2028
2029
2030
2031
2032
2033
2034
2035
2036
2037
2038
2039
2040
2041
2042
2043
2044
2045
2046
2047
2048
2049
2050
2051
2052
2053
2054
2055
2056
2057
2058
2059
2060
2061
2062
2063
2064
2065
2066
2067
2068
2069
2070
2071
2072
2073
2074
2075
2076
2077
2078
2079
2080
2081
2082
2083
2084
2085
2086
2087
2088
2089
2090
2091
2092
2093
2094
2095
2096
2097
2098
2099
2100

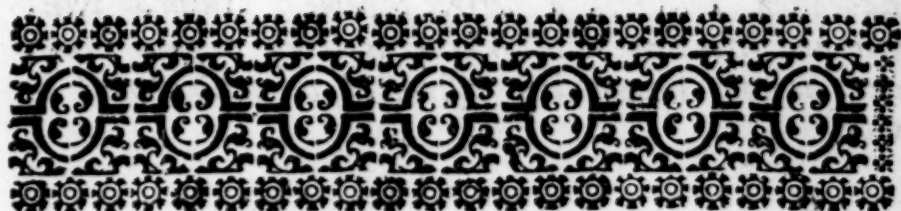
By THOMAS ARNOLD

Published at the REQUEST of the Young
Men's Meeting, and a great number of Minis-
ters present.


Printed by J. G. & Co. at the
British Museum, 1847.

LONDON :

Printed for R. Smith at the British Museum, and
J. G. & Co. at the British Museum, 1847.



P R E F A C E.


THE Discourse now offered to the Publick in its Original Composition, being Part of a Set of Sermons on the Evidences of the Christian Religion, the Reader will more easily apprehend the Design of the Discourse, and the Strength of the Reasoning, if he hath, first, a brief View of the Method in which this important Argument was treated. The great Truths of natural Religion, the Being, Perfections, and moral Providence of God; the moral Difference of Actions, and a future State of Recompences, being laid as the Foundation; I chose to build on it, the Proof of Christianity, in the following Order.

Prop. I. The main Doctrines and Duties of the Christian Religion are not only agreeable to Reason, but may be proved immediately by it: These, on Account of their internal Evidence and Excellency, claim our Belief and Regard, as well as on Account of the Revelation which delivers and enjoins them. The State of the World at the Time when Christ appeared, rendred it highly worthy of God, in an extraordinary Way, to furnish Mankind with a perfect Draught of these. And unassisted Reason having ever failed of forming such a Draught, that our Saviour, without the Advantage of a learned

Education, delivered a perfect Scheme of Natural Religion and Morality to the World, is it self a good Proof, that he was immediately instructed or commissioned by God.

Prop. II. *The Doctrines and Precepts added by the Gospel to natural Religion, and which Reason could not discover, or, at most, not easily and fully, are in themselves credible; suitable to the State of Man, worthy the Perfections of God, and highly advantageous for us to know or practise: This Proposition is the Subject of the following Discourse.*

Prop. III. *Our Saviour, who taught these Doctrines as from God was every way worthy of Credit: The exemplary Piety, Goodness and Integrity of his whole Life, prove him to have had truly at heart the Interests of Virtue, and the Happiness of Mankind; and to be incapable of undertaking a religious Imposture: His constantly declining to indulge the popular Notions of the Jews, of a temporal Messiah, and an earthly Kingdom, tho' this Indulgence would have made him a King; is another strong Argument of his deserving all Credit, on account of his Integrity; his freely reproving the Superstition, Hypocrisy, Pride, and Avarice of the Pharisees, the leading Set among his Countrymen; is another. And, finally, his dying to confirm the Truth of his spiritual Religion; these prove, beyond Exception, his Integrity. And the Miracles He wrought, the Prophecies he delivered, and those accomplished in him; his Resurrection from the Dead, and pouring out the holy Spirit in his miraculous Gifts on his Apostles, abundantly prove his Mission from God, and that God really delivered him those Doctrines which he taught as divine.*

Prop. IV. *If we are asked, Why we believe those Things of Jesus Christ, that he lived thus exemplarily, taught such Doctrines, worked such Miracles, rose from the*

P R E F A C E.

v

the Dead, and enabled his Disciples to work Miracles in his Name, and the like? We have this easy Answer to give, That we have the Testimony of Eye and Ear-Witnesses, of the Apostles, and first Disciples; Witnesses unexceptionably credible; for they were competent Judges of the Facts related, as to which they could not be themselves deceived; and they had neither Inclination, Interest, or Ability, to deceive the World in this Affair; and they were inabled by God to confirm their Testimony by fresh Miracles, and thus actually spread the Religion of Jesus in the World; a thing impossible, had not their Testimony been true. Farther, for our receiving their Writings as of divine Authority, we have these Reasons: We are expressly assured, Christ promised his Spirit to lead them into all Truth; which, on account of the Importance of his Doctrines, there is Reason to think he would do; and, that they proved the Promise accomplished to them by their miraculous Powers and Gifts; and are therefore justly regarded by us, not only as credible Witnesses of Facts, but authoritative Expounders of the Doctrines of Christ. And, finally, as to the Books of the Old Testament, which we receive, tho' they have other Evidences of their Truth and Genuineness, this is sufficient Satisfaction for common Christians, that their historical Accounts are quoted as true and authentick; their Precepts, Predictions, &c. as of divine Authority, by our Lord and his Apostles.

Prop. V. That the Writings we receive as the Apostles, were really their Writings, and continue uncorrupted to our Times, we have all imaginable Assurance: They were^a acknowledged for theirs by the first Christians, who were the best Judges; they were immediately transcribed by many Hands, translated into different Languages, and Copies of them dispersed through

^a See this fully proved in Mr. Lardner's excellent Treat. of the Credib. p. 2. V. 1 and 2.

all Nations, and innumerable Passages cited from them by the Writers of the first Ages ; so that it was impossible to alter or corrupt any number of Copies, without being immediately discovered and contradicted by other Copies : Whereas all the antient Copies and Versions, which we have in great Numbers, agree in every material Point. The Proof then of Christianity, may be brought to this short Issue. The Credibility of its Doctrines being supposed, the great Question is, *Why we believe the Records of the Facts?* To which we have this good Answer ready, *That we have much stronger Reasons to believe these, than any antient Accounts of Facts whatsoever.*

This summary View of the Evidences of Christianity being premised, I am next to make my Acknowledgments to my Reverend Brethren, and to the young Gentlemen who support the LECTURE, for their favourable Reception of this Discourse ; and, to desire the whole may be read as candidly as they heard the greater Part of it. Let me be allowed also, to declare my great Satisfaction in the Readiness of the young Gentlemen, to encourage a rational and amiable Representation of the Christian Doctrines ; and exhort them to push their Inquiries in Religion, and lay the Foundation firm, in a rational Assurance of its Truth. Whatever some may imagine, an implicit Faith which rests only on the Authority of Parents, or Ministers ; or an Enthusiastick one which is resolvable only into some warm Emotions, and unaccountable Impulses on the Mind ; are, for real Excellency and valuable Effects, no way comparable to that Truth, which is produced by an honest impartial Study of the Proofs of Christianity, and a clear Discernment of its Evidences. The implicit, or the enthusiastick Believer, will be in danger of having his Faith shaken and overturned, by every Assault of an Unbeliever, and even by his own cool Thoughts ; he will be likely to place the main of his

P R E F A C E.

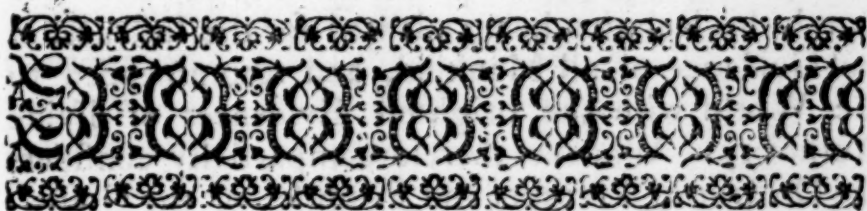
vii

Religion in Observances of little real Value; and to corrupt the beautiful Simplicity of the Gospel, by a large Mixture of absurd Party Notions, which have, to him, the same Recommendation with the greatest Truths; ascribing to God Qualities and Actions unworthy of Him, will, probably, be a great part of his Devotion; and the more he forms himself to a Resemblance of this false Image of the Deity, the more unlike will he grow to the best of Beings, in true Goodness; his Application to what is solidly good, being ill supported, will be faint and inconstant, while perhaps with a warmth of Zeal he shall be engaged in promoting, by the worst Methods, some things which, instead of being Christianity, are the grossest Corruptions of it; and of Consequence his Religion, instead of clearing and ennobling his Mind, fills his Breast with an uncomfortable Gloom, and superstitious Terrors; and instead of rendering him a Blessing to all about him, makes him uneasy, injurious and intolerable. Whereas the Believer, whose Faith is built on a clear and full Conviction of the Excellency and Evidences of true Religion, like a House founded on a Rock, will triumph over the Assaults of Infidelity and the Shocks of Temptation. Things really excellent in Religion will employ his Zeal and Application, the Love of God, the Love of Mankind, and the cultivating a Disposition of Soul for the enjoying a Happiness arising out of the Perfection of Knowledge, Devotion, Goodness, and Friendship; his Methods of promoting Religion will be sound Reasoning, proposed in the Spirits of Meekness, and seconded with the attractive Force of a good Example: From clear Discernment and happy Experience convinced of the Excellency of Religion, his Obedience will be free, chearful, and constant: Easy in himself, and pleased with his Duty, he will be easy and agreeable to all that converse with him; and, finally, his amiable and worthy Apprehensions of God, and of the gracious Design of the Gospel, and his rational Assurance of the Certainty, and infinite Value of the Happi-

Happiness promised by our Saviour to Obedience, will animate him to a constant Improvement in all Goodness, cheer him amidst the Evils of Life, and brighten its Pleasures, brighten even the gloom of Death; and will support his Soul till he exchange Faith for Sight, and feel himself happier than he can now conceive or hope.



JOHN



JOHN viii. 12.

Then spake Jesus again to them saying, I am the Light of the World: He that followeth me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.

THese Words contain an Argument used by our Saviour with his Hearers, to prevail upon them to submit to his Authority, and embrace his Religion. The Argument is this: That in this Method they would gain Assurance in Matters of very great Importance, as to which they had before been ignorant, or uncertain; such clear Light as would give them full Satisfaction of Mind at present, and conduct them to eternal Happiness. *Light*, by an easy and elegant Metaphor, signifies Knowledge or Instruction, because what the one is to the Eye for guiding the Body, the other is to the Mind for informing the Judgment, and directing the moral Conduct. He therefore that gives Instruction to others, may be called a *Light* to them; and he that gives Instruction to all Mankind in Affairs of the greatest Importance, and such Instruction as would lead them, if pursued, to never-ending Life and Happiness, may justly be stiled *the Light of the World*, and *the Light of Life*. As the Sun is, to the natural World, the common Fountain of Light, such was Jesus, by his Doctrines and Precepts, to the

B

moral;

moral, his Religion being adapted for the Instruction and Guidance of all Mankind, and recommended to the World with the brightest Evidences of divine Authority. Whoever therefore impartially considers the Doctrines, Precepts and Promises of the Gospel, may be easily convinced that our Saviour, with the justest Reason, assumed this Title, *the Light of the World, the Light of Life*; for besides his giving Mankind a clear and consistent Summary of those religious Truths and Duties which were discoverable by Reason, and free from all those Errors Men had before mixed with them: He discovered to them several great and important Truths, as to which they were before ignorant, or in doubt; Truths which have the mightiest Influence to excite Mankind to the Practice of Goodness, to clear the Darkness and Confusion they were involved in, and guide them to Life and Happiness.

My present Business will be to make good this Assertion of our Saviour in the Text, by an enumeration of Particulars; from which it will appear, that our Saviour revealed to the World several noble Truths before unknown, or not clearly and fully known; Truths of the greatest Service to the Virtue and Happiness of Mankind. As I go over the several Instances, I shall endeavour to make it evident, that the Doctrines and Precepts added by the Gospel to natural Religion, and the Truths which the World knew, or might have known before, are, in themselves credible, worthy the Perfections of God, and accommodate to the State of Mankind, and therefore highly advantageous for us to know or practise; and that this, which may be called the *Internal Proof* of Christianity, is a strong Inducement to every considerate Person, to embrace the Christian Religion, and follow our Saviour, who was indeed *the Light of the World, and the Light of Life*, conducting Men to Life eternal. Tho' some of the Truths I shall in-
stance

stance in, were before discovered to the *Jews* in the *Old Testament*, yet, as to these, our Saviour justly claims the Honour of being *the Light of the World*, since it was *purely by Means of his Religion* they were made known to *all Mankind*; and tho' some others were more fully revealed by his Apostles than by our Lord himself, yet the Honour of these belongs to him, since he taught his Apostles these, either immediately or by the divine Spirit, which, after his Ascension, he sent down upon them. That this Discourse may not run out too great a Length, omitting others, I shall confine my self to the following Instances :

The Account Christianity gives us of the Original of Evil. The Doctrine of a *particular Providence*. The *full Assurance* of the Pardon of *all Sins* on Repentance, and the Dispensing this Pardon in a Way consistent with the Honour of the divine Holiness and Government, through the Death and Mediation of the Son of God. The *full and express* Promise of divine Assistance. The Information, that the *present* is a *final State* of Trial : And, that the Reward of the imperfect Virtue of a short Life, will be *complete and everlasting* Happiness. And particularly, that our Victories over the Flesh, and keeping it in subjection to Reason, shall be recompenced by raising our Bodies from the Grave, glorious, spiritual, powerful, and immortal. The setting apart a *seventh* Day for the publick Worship of God, and more intimate Application to the Duties of Piety and Virtue. The Institution of the Sacraments, and the Ministry.— These additional Doctrines and Duties will, upon a Review, appear Improvements of natural Religion, worthy of God, for their Tendency to render our Piety and Virtue more easy and perfect ; and Proofs that our Saviour, who communicated the Knowledge of them to Mankind, was *the Light of the World*, and *the Light of Life*.

I. The Account Christianity gives us of the Entrance of Evil, moral and natural, into the World, and its Prevalency, is of great Advantage to us ; and by informing Mankind of this, our Saviour proved himself *the Light of the World*. Besides what Reason offers, for vindicating the divine Perfections and Providence in this difficult Inquiry, to which Christians have an equal Right with the Deists, Revelation acquaints us with several Particulars of great Use for clearing the Difficulty. Reason informs us, 'tis fit intelligent and free Beings should be tried and approved, before they are rewarded, and be established in Virtue ; before they are fixed, unalterably, in Happiness : Since otherwise God would not govern them according to their Nature, which renders them capable of an *approved Virtue*, and they could not enjoy the highest Satisfaction of all ; the Satisfaction arising from conscious Integrity, maintained amidst Difficulties and Temptations, and from thus rendring themselves proper Objects of the divine Complacency. From Reason we farther learn, that if it be fit our Love to God and Goodness should be tried by Difficulties and Temptations, it really makes no Difference on the whole, whether these be more or fewer, stronger or weaker, provided our Great Creator and Governor make answerable Allowances, or grant answerable Assistances ; proportion the Reward to the Difficulties of the Conflict, and accepting lower Attainments in Goodness where the Opposition is stronger, reward them as He would higher Attainments in more advantageous Circumstances. That God will thus deal with us we are assured by Reason, since He is infinitely wise and good, knows our Frame, knows what in every Action is *strictly ours*, and what is to be imputed to the unavoidable Influence of Constitution, Education, and the like ; sees the Strength of the virtuous Disposition, tho' struggling beneath, and almost over-whelmed by opposite

Incli-

Inclinations and disadvantageous external Circumstances, 'tis scarce discernable by human Eyes; and must approve, love, and reward us, in Proportion to what is properly our own in every virtuous Action, and deduct from the Account of every Action, in appearance vitious, whatever is really owing to Causes and Circumstances out of our Power. Reason farther informs us, that the strong Inclinations in our Frame to sensible Good, and Aversions from sensible Evil, and the Passions founded on these, which occasion so much Irregularity in our Conduct, are yet proper Trials of our Virtue, which is to show its Strength in the steady Government of them: And that all the *natural Evils* we complain of, as Want, Pain, Sickness, Disappointments, and the like, are either proper Correctives of Vice, or necessary for exercising, approving, or increasing our Submission to God, our Love to Goodness, our Compassion to the Unhappy, and numerous other Virtues whose present internal Satisfaction, and future Rewards, will abundantly compensate for all we suffer in their Practice. These, and other Considerations, Reason offers in Vindication of the Wisdom, Holiness and Goodness of God, which seem impeached by the strong Propensities in our Constitution, to Objects that prove the Occasions of Sin, and by the many natural Evils which abound amidst his Works. And this Defence is strengthened by the Christian Revelation, which informs us, that this State of Things was not the *original Appointment* of God; but took its Rise from the *wilful Transgression* of the First Parents of Mankind^a; that their Sin would not have been suffered to produce such Effects, had not God provided an equal Remedy, *foreordained before the Foundation of the World*^b; had He not determined to make answerable Allowances^c, and give answerable

^a Gen. chap. iii.^b 1 Pet. i. 20.^c Gen. iii. 15.

Assistances; had he not, in consideration of the sharpness of the Trial, appointed it to be but short, and not only resolved to accept an imperfect Virtue, but reward it, through the Obedience of his Son, with perfect and *everlasting Happiness*^d, with *eternal Life*^e, the Reward annexed in the original Constitution, to unfinning Obedience: So that *as in Adam all die, in Christ all are made alive*^f. This Solution St. Paul gives us at large, *Rom. v. from Verse 12 to the End*, where he expressly assures us, that all the ill Effects owing to the Disobedience of the first Adam, were fully remedied by the good Effects following the perfect Obedience of the second; and, *that as by the Offence of one, Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation; so by the Righteousness of one, the free Gift came upon all Men to the Justification of Life; and where Sin abounded, in its pernicious Fruits, Grace did much more abound in the contrary.*

As for the Vanity, Disappointments, and Wretchedness which attend the present State, the Permission of these appear wise and kind; since we are, according to the Doctrine of the Gospel, after a few Days spent here, designed for a spiritual and divine Happiness in another World^g, and hereby prevented from easily giving up ourselves to *sensual Good*^h, to the debasing our Spirits, spoiling their Relish for rational Pleasures, and losing this divine everlasting Felicityⁱ. The superstitious and dreadful Apprehensions of the Deity, which the View of the world of Mankind might otherwise occasion, are, by this Representation of the divine Designs towards us intirely prevented, and we are formed to the highest Veneration and Love, to a firm Trust and a cheerful Resignation to an infinitely wise and good God, who over-rules what to Appearance are the greatest

^d Rom. 5. 19.

^e John x. 10.

^f 1 Cor. xv. 22.

^g Heb. xi. 13.

^h Chap. xii. 1—11.

ⁱ Luke xvi. 19, and

following Verses.

Evils, for the Production of the greatest Good. We are also, by the Scripture Account of the Fall and its Consequences, hindered from indulging to the Violence of Inclination and Passion, under pretence that they are *natural*; as it teaches us that this is not a Part of *original* Nature; that the Permission of it was designed for the Trial of our Virtue; and, that by being strictly moderated, it may prove the Occasion of a more approved Virtue, and a higher Happiness^k. We are also by this Account, secured against that melancholy Notion, and its discouraging Consequences, that these strong irregular Propensions are the Effects of our own Sins, in an imagined State of Existence before we entered these Bodies, which yet was the best Account the best Philosophers, without Revelation, gave of the present State of Mankind; an Account which made what was otherwise at worst, but an Infelicity, appear a Guilt, or the Effect and Punishment of it; and tended to discourage us in the Struggle, since we had less Reason to expect favourable Allowances and Assistances from God, if these Propensions were of our own contracting; and could have less Satisfaction in a sincere and approved Virtue, because imperfect, while we thought this Imperfection owing to our own wilful Transgressions in a præ-existent State. These Advantages which the Gospel supplies us with, for solving the grand difficult Question of, *The Origin of Evil*; should greatly recommend the Gospel to every sober Deist, who is equally concerned with the Christian, to vindicate the divine Perfections, and consistently with these to account for moral and natural Evil. This hath not been duly considered by some of them, in their Objections against this Part of Christianity, who have talked as if they were not equally obliged to account for

^k James i. 12 — 15.

these, or as if *Revelation* brought those Evils into the World which it found in it, at the same time supplying us with the best Remedies against them.

II. The Doctrine of a *particular Providence*, which Reason renders highly probable, is made certain by the Gospel ; and by assuring us of this, our Saviour justified his Claim to be *the Light of the World*. The sacred Writings inform us, that God not only governs the World by a *general Providence*, loves Holiness and hates Vice, and will finally make Religion and Virtue the Interest of all their Votaries, and the Vicious miserable; according to their Demerits ; but that he orders the particular Circumstances of all, especially of the Pious and Good, after a manner that may prove most favourable to their Piety and Virtue, and their greatest Happiness upon the Whole. That the Evils of Life are not *merely* the Result of the present Constitution of Things, in the general established by God for wise Reasons ; but his fatherly Chastisements, and the Effects of his Love, designed for our Amendment¹, or as Trials to exercise and improve us in Virtue^m, and always allotted us in the best Seasons for answering these Purposes. That not the smallest Event is exempted from his Direction, since *a Sparrow falls not to the Ground without our heavenly Father*ⁿ, and by Him *even the Hairs of our Head are numbered*. We know, from the Scriptures, *that all things work together for good to them that love God*^o ; that if in our Ways we acknowledge Him, *he will direct our Paths*^p, and if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, *he will add all other things unto us*^q. That if we commend our Ways to him in well-doing, and by Prayer

¹ Heb. xiii. 7, and following.

^m James i. 2.

ⁿ Matt. x. 29, 30.

^o Rom. viii. 28.

^p Prov. iii. 6.

^q Matt. vi. 23.

and Trust, *cast our Cares upon him; he will care for us*; and not only reward us at last, according to the Degrees of our Piety and Obedience, but so direct all the Events of our Lives as may best promote them. What is there can cheer the Minds of the Considerate like these Assurances, amidst the Folly, Weakness, and Uncertainty that inseparably attend the present State? No Persuasion like this, for raising a Man above all Temptations; and leaving him nothing to be concerned about, but doing his Duty in whatever Station of Life he may be cast. Nothing like this, to calm his Mind and make him easy under Afflictions, especially those brought on him by the Folly or Wickedness of others; since he is thus assured, that nothing out of his own Power can really hurt him. It is therefore a great Excellency in the Christian Revelation, that it not only discovers to us, in the strongest Light, those general Principles of the divine Perfections and Providence on which this Faith is built, but places, in the clearest and most familiar Light, this particular important Truth, and gives it the Sanction of the most express Authority.

III. The Assurance that God's pardoning Mercy extends to *all Sins* and *all Sinners*, on Condition of Repentance and Amendment, is another invaluable Part of the Christian Revelation; and by assuring us of this, Christ was, in a most desirable Instance, *the Light of a guilty World*. Tho' Reason gives good Ground to hope, God will pardon the Penitent and thoroughly Reformed; yet how far his pardoning Mercy shall extend, whether to great Sins repeated after Renunciations, to Sins that have left a great Disability on the Mind for the future Practice of Goodness, or which have had most mischievous Consequences to the World beyond our Power to

repair, and especially where a great Part of Life hath been wasted in the Service of Vice; as to these Particulars, Reason cannot give a distinct Answer, entirely satisfying; at most 'tis silent, whether such great Sinners, tho' real Penitents, shall receive any Reward, and of what kind and degree. God is free in the exercise of his Goodness, and dispensing unmerited and forfeited Favours; and therefore what Share such shall receive, it cannot certainly say. It is therefore an invaluable Part of the Christian Scheme admirably suited to the frail and corrupt State of Mankind, that it assures the Forgiveness of all Sins to the Penitent, that alone against the *Holy Ghost* being excluded^f, because it renders Repentance impossible, destroying all the Gospel-Motives to it, by ascribing to evil Spirits the fullest Evidences of its Truth, the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit. How should all of us therefore who are conscious to so many Offences against God, and need so much his pardoning Mercy, rejoice in those full Assurances, *that the Blood of Christ cleanse from all Sin^t*, and that *all manner of Sins and Iniquities shall be forgiven* to the Penitent and Reformed^u. What can be better adapted to beget an ingenuous Sorrow and Repentance, for having offended so good a God, and to animate our Endeavours after the most advanced Degrees of Holiness, as the best Return to so gracious and so compassionate a Sovereign and Friend? What can better prevent the hardning Influence of Despair, or what inspire a stronger Abhorrence of Vice, than a View of its Ingratitude and Baseness, as committed in Abuse of such Goodness? And farther allowing the most, that Reason when cool and undisturbed could in a good Degree assure us, that the pardoning Mercy of God

^f Matt. xii. 24, *and following Verses.*

^u Matt. xii. 31.

^t 1 John i. 7.

would reach to all Sins repented of, it would yet be greatly desirable to have exprefs Assurances of this from God himself, in his Word. Guilt and its Consequents, Grief and Fear, cloud the Mind; make Truths of this kind appear in a doubtful Light, and incline us, even when we most need the assurance of their Truth, to reverse those Judgments we had formed in our cool Hours, and to doubt of the Mercies of God extending to us, so guilty ^w. Whereas the clear and exprefs Declarations of God in his Word *always remain the same*; and as at such times we are in no Disposition to doubt the Truth of his Word, neither can we question the Extent of his Grace when so fully asserted.

IV. The manner of dispensing this free and extensive Grace of God, through the Atonement of the Blood of Christ, and his consequent Mediation at the Right-hand of God, is only to be learn'd from the Christian Revelation; and by discovering this, our Saviour proved himself to be *the Light of the World*: He tells us himself, *his Blood was to be shed for many, for the Remission of Sins* ^x; and in Christ *we have Redemption, through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of the Father's Grace* ^y: *He was delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification* ^z. *Who then shall condemn? Shall Christ who died? yea rather who is risen again, who is even at the Right-hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us* ^a. God, who is not only a Being supremely good, but a most wise and holy Governor, was concerned so to dispense his pardoning Mercy to a sinful World, as at the same time to encourage them to repent, and to prevent their presuming on his Goodness, and abusing its rich Discoveries to greater Corruption and

^w See Mr. Grove on the Proof of a future State, from Reason, Chap. ix. § 3, 7, and 8.

^x Matt. xxvi, 28.

^y Eph. i. 7.

^z Rom. iv. 25.

^a viii. 34.

Wickedness ; the natural Disposition of all Sinners. Guilt makes Men suspicious and fearful of God, and while they are uncertain of his accepting them, they cannot easily resolve on the Labours of Mortification and a thorough Amendment ; they therefore need the fullest Discoveries and strongest Assurances of the divine Forgiveness, to encourage them to scatter their guilty Fears, and melt and overcome the Obstinacy of their Hearts. At the same time, the farther they have proceeded in Vice, and the more they want those Assurances of Mercy, the more disposed are they to abuse them ; to think Sin, they have so long indulged, a light Evil, when God freely forgives it, and to neglect true Holiness as an unnecessary, because difficult Attainment, tho' God, as they think he could do no less, demand Repentance and future Obedience ; yet, they fancy, he will not *rigorously* insist on *them*, but be as ready to excuse or forgive *future* Transgressions as *past*. Obedience to the Laws of God, and the steady Practice of true Goodness, are essential to the Perfection and Happiness of Mankind. An infinitely wise, holy and good God, cannot but will Men should practise these, and do whatever is becoming him to promote their Practice. It was therefore worthy the Wisdom of the great Governor of the World, to temper his full Discoveries of pardoning Mercy to Sinners, with a proportionable Discovery of his Abhorrence of Vice, and Love of Holiness : And this he hath done, by giving up a Person of such high Dignity as his only begotten Son, not only to be *made Flesh*, and live upon Earth for the Promotion of Piety and Virtue by his Instructions and Example, but to die on the Cross as an atoning Sacrifice ; by appointing that He, who willingly undertook our Cause, and gave up himself to this difficult Work for our Sakes, should, to manifest the Father's Concern for his violated Laws, suffer and die as our Substitute ;

stitute ; and discovering, in this Submission, the most excellent Virtue and Obedience, cause the Concessions made to him in favour of guilty Men, to appear as the Reward of his extraordinary Merit, as well as Encouragements to the Penitent to exert themselves to the utmost. What could more demonstrate the Concern of the divine Being to advance Holiness and root out Vice, than his subjecting for this End his only begotten Son to the Meanness and Labours of a mortal Condition, and the suffering of Death? What could more declare his Abhorrence of the Disobedience of Mankind (excepting the Destruction of the Disobedient, which this Method was designed to prevent) than his not empowering, even his own Son, to grant us a full Pardon, but on Condition of his becoming *obedient unto Death*^b, and thus appointing Him who was not only most dear to his Father, as his only Begotten, but as perfectly submissive and obedient, to expiate our Sins by his Death ; that we might be effectually convinced what our Sins deserved, and on account of the Son's meritorious Obedience and Death, granting him a Power to give not only a full Pardon of Sins past, but eternal Life to those that believe, that are thoroughly repentent, and sincerely, tho' imperfectly, good^c. The merciful Goodness of God, and the Motives to Repentance, from Ingenuity and Gratitude to a pardoning God, are equally great and affecting, as if our Sins had been forgiven without a Propitiation ; nay greater, since God himself provides the Propitiation^d, and thus shews it is not owing to an Indifference to our Sins ; but to his unbounded Mercy and Goodness, that he forgives them. We are also strongly convinced of the great Malignity of Evil, by the Agonies the Redeemer endured to take it away ; and engaged not to abuse

^b Rom. v. 19.^c John xvii. 1—5.^d 1 John iv. 9, 10.
the

the Goodness of God so grossly, as to continue practising what He *hated*, more than He *loved* the *Life* of his own Son.

If it be objected, *Where is the Justice of punishing the Innocent, that the Guilty may escape?* I answer, There is no Injustice in permitting those Evils to fall on the Innocent, which to the Guilty are *Punishments* of Sin, when important Ends of the divine Government are hereby answered; when the suffering Party *voluntarily* submits to those Evils, and when even *those Evils* (his submitting to them being in him an Instance of the most perfect Virtue) *procure* to him the *highest* Happiness and Reward. And this is the Scripture Account of the Affair: *No Man* took our Saviour's *Life* from him, but he *laid it down* of himself, and therefore the Father loved him, because he *laid down his Life*, and because he *humbled himself*, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross^e; therefore God *highly exalted him*, and gave him a Name above every Name^f, and a Power to give eternal Life to as many as he had given him^g; that is, to all the penitent and sincerely good. Suppose a King, out of a Concern to maintain his Authority, and secure the future Obedience of his Subjects, refuse, even at the Request of his own Son, to recal banished Rebels, unless his Son would go to them in their Banishment, and endeavour personally to reclaim them to a Sense of their Rebellion, and of their Duty, and the Prince willingly undertake this; 'tis certain, by living for a time with the Banished, he *suffers* what is the *Punishment* of their Rebellion, tho' himself innocent; and this without any Injustice, because it is his own *Choice*, and because he hath the *Satisfaction* of reclaiming the Rebellious; and, as a *Reward*, sees them restored to their own Country, and receives himself a Share in his Father's

^e John x. 17, 18.

^f Phil. ii. 9.

^g John x. 2.
Throne.

Throne. 'Tis the Happiness of God himself to communicate Good, and this our Saviour is rewarded with in the highest Degree, by receiving a Power to confer everlasting Happiness on all the human Race who do not absolutely unfit themselves for it. In this Method of shewing Favour to Mankind the Innocent is not punished, that the Guilty, as such, may escape; but He suffers those Evils, to excite in them a Sense of their Guilt, and bring them to a Temper which may qualify them for Mercy. The Guilty, after all, are not forgiven but upon Condition of Repentance and Reformation, which is the whole the Objectors contend for, as necessary to secure the Honour of the divine Laws and Government. And if, *besides* the Repentance and Reformation of the Guilty, the Sufferings and Death of our *voluntary* Substitute are required and accepted; the Honour of the divine Holiness and Government are certainly *better* guarded.

'Tis true, did the Obedience and Death of Christ excuse us from the necessary Obligations of Holiness and Obedience, and would God on account of these receive and make happy the Unholy and Impenitent, there would then be unanswerable Strength in the Objection; but there is really none, when this Atonement is so propounded as to increase our Obligations to Repentance and Holiness^h; and we are not allowed, on any other Terms, to expect Advantage from itⁱ. *Christ crucified, for our Sins, is therefore the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God unto Salvation of all them that believe*^k. And this Method of Reconciliation, tho' Reason could not discover it, is yet readily approved and submitted to by Reason when discovered by God, since 'tis not only not unreasonable, but worthy of God, and most frequently and expressly taught in a Revelation which has all desirable external Evidences of a divine Original.

^h Titus ii. 14.

ⁱ Rom. vi. 1—17.

^k I Cor. i. 23, 24.

16 CHRIST the *Light of the World.*

I have been the longer on this Head, because this is a distinguishing Doctrine of the Christian Religion, and without supposing its Truth, the appointing a Being of such unparalleled Dignity as the only begotten Son of God to become incarnate and die, appears unaccountable, since a common Prophet might have answered every other Purpose, excepting the *taking away* the Sins of the *World* by his *Death*, and *regaining Immortality* for Mankind by his *perfect Obedience*.

As to the Mediation of Christ, founded on his Atonement^l, and our being appointed to *ask every Blessing in the Name of Christ*^m, this Constitution is fitted to keep alive a sacred Awe of the divine Majestyⁿ; since, as Sinners, we cannot be freely admitted to approach him, but through his Son's Mediation^o, and to cherish the deepest Humility in us amidst the Privileges we are advanced unto, and the large Expectations in which we are indulged. It naturally preserves on the Mind a strong Abhorrence of Sin, which bars our free Access to an infinitely good God, while at the same time we are raised to a filial Confidence in our Approaches to God, who can address him in the Name of his Son, who is the *Propitiation* for our Sins^p. And it farther instructs us, most convincingly, in the Love of the Deity to Holiness and Goodness, and his Concern for our Perfection in them, when every Prayer, in the Name of Christ, is fitted to put us in mind of God's rewarding his Son's Love to Mankind, and his expensive Undertaking to restore Holiness and Happiness to the human Race, with the Power of dispensing those invaluable Blessings of Pardon, the Aids of the divine Spirit, and eternal Life; a Reward and Happiness than which there cannot be a

^l Rom. viii. 34.

^m 1 John ii. 1, 2.

ⁿ John xvi. 23, 26.

^o Heb. xii. 24, 28, 29.

^p Heb. x. 19—22.

greater conferred, since 'tis the highest Happiness of God himself that He is perfectly good, and communicates the greatest Good; and therefore the noblest Discovery of his Love to the Perfection of Goodness in his Son, that He thus rewards his Labours to restore Mankind to Virtue, Perfection and Happiness.

V. The full and express Promises of *divine Assistance* in the Practice of Virtue, and the Pursuit of Immortality; are another valuable Part of the Christian Revelation; a Favour Reason could not assure us of, tho' it gave good Hopes of its being granted; and by assuring us of these our Saviour merited the Title of *the Light of the World*. To reasonable Men, apprehensive of the Excellency and Obligation of Piety and Goodness, there is nothing so discouraging as the Consciousness of their Weakness, and the Difficulty they find from within to surmount Temptation, and act with Steadiness in Conformity to the Convictions of their Minds; incumbered as they are by irregular Inclinations and Habits, continually diverted by Sense, often set wrong by bad Education, opposed by the Follies, Vices and ill Examples of others, and frequently losing Sight of their Duty and the Motives to it, in the most important Seasons of Trial, and finding it returning at last only to shame them for an unsuitable Conduct. In such Circumstances nothing can be more encouraging, nothing more valued by an honest Mind, than the Assurance of divine Aids. How desirable the Assurance, that an ever present God, who knows our Frame, is tenderly concerned for our Perfection and Happiness, and will not only make every favourable Allowance, but, if we exert our selves, and implore his Aids, proportion our Strength to our Trials⁹, keep off Temptations, which in a careless or

soft Hour would ruin us, *never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able^r*, or by peculiar Assistances make every Trial issue in the Establishment of our Piety and Virtue, and the Increase of our future Happiness! No Temptation can stand against an honest Mind full of a Sense of the Excellency and Importance of Holiness, thus encouraged, and thus supported. How valuable therefore are these Assurances, that *if earthly Parents know how to give good Gifts to their Children, much more will our heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him^r*; that his Grace shall be sufficient for us, and his Strength appear illustrious in our Weakness^r; and, that *if we work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling, with a holy Caution, lest by Negligence or vitious Indulgence, we forfeit his kind Influences; he will work in us both to will and to do^u!* What an Advantage the Presence and Care of a prudent, tender and faithful Friend, who will watch our unguarded Hours, and insinuate the Rules and Encouragements of Religion, in the most favourable or the most needful Seasons! How much more advantageous and animating the constant Vigilance and Favour of an ever present God, who hath an immediate Access to our Souls, who knows them in all their Weaknesses, and who can insinuate or excite, in the most prevailing way, a Sense of our Duty or Danger, and the noblest Motives to exert our selves! Reason could not give an absolute Assurance of these Assistances; for tho' it convinces us we need them, yet till we know how we came to need them, it could not certainly say, our wanting these was not a Proof we had before forfeited them. Farther, tho' Reason can assure us that God will make gracious Allowances for Temptation and Opposition; that our

^r 1 Cor. x. 13.^t 2 Cor. xii. 9.^r Luke xi. 13. Matt. vii. 7—11.^u Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Abilities are the *Measure* of our *Duty*, and that God will reward us at last, according to the Sincerity, Vigour and Constancy of our Endeavours, yet it could not certainly inform us, that God had not left us to struggle with all Opposition in our own Strength; and that having given us Understanding, Conscience and Liberty, he did not expect we should, with these alone, make good our Ground. The Effect of this Apprehension, even in the Best, would be disheartning their Attempts after exalted degrees of Virtue, and disposing them to be content with lower and easier Attainments, esteeming the other as above them; and thus failing of that eminent Virtue they might really arrive at, and with ease too, if encouraged by the Hope of divine Assistances, and blessed with them. Tho' some therefore of the Heathen Philosophers^x, cheered their Disciples with the Hope of divine Assistances, yet others^y, who were great Friends to Virtue, were of this Opinion, That Success in Things without us might be asked of the Gods, but Virtue was to be fetched wholly from our selves. In Contradiction to this Opinion, what a vast Advantage is it to consider our selves as always acting under the Observation of the best of Beings, ever ready to cherish and confirm, as well as approve and reward our Virtue! The Consciousness of the Presence of such a Being, and such a Friend, and the constant Apprehension of his Perfections and Love to us, which these Expectations from Him naturally cherish, will often, without any additional Strength communicated from above, give a Force to the Mind, which Reason, destitute of this Hope, is a Stranger to;

^x *Socrates in Xen. de Mem.* l. i. c. 4. and *Plat. Alc.* 2^{do} *Xenoph. Cyropæd.* l. viii. c. 45. and *Antonin.* l. ix. 140.

^y — *Virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit — Fortunam a Deo petendam, a seipso fumendam sapientiam. Cic. de Nat. Deorum,* l. iii. 136.

and be crowned with Success. In a World where Virtue is often so ill treated, and so violently opposed, where ill Examples abound, where Vice is often carested, and Men are remarkable at the same time for Wickedness and Prosperity, what a strengthening to Virtue is the Consciousness of the Presence, Aid and Favour of the supreme Being! And what an Advantage is it to Christians, that we are allowed, yea, obliged to pray to God, and depend on him for his Assistance? Thus keeping warm the Conviction of his Presence whom, else, we might too easily forget; by degrees concluding, that if God would not assist Virtue now, he would not reward it at last; and, if it was so little his Care, it should be less ours. This Advantage is yet more considerable with regard to those who, by faulty Compliances, have strengthened irregular Inclinations; and by contracting Habits of Vice, have rendered a virtuous Temper next to impossible to them alone. What would remain for these, but to sit down in a sullen Despair of Virtue and true Happiness, or to give up the Reins to their vitious Passions, if destitute of divine Aids? How could Reason barely from their want of Help, assure such of obtaining it, when their great Want was a Proof of their former great Guilt and Abuse of their Liberty? To have gone far in Vice, is the Case of a great part of Mankind, and was the Case of the whole World, with a few Exceptions, when the Gospel appeared. How important then, how necessary a Doctrine was that of divine Assistances, and the Promise of the Spirit? and what a Proof is it of the Excellency of our Religion, and its proceeding from the great Lover of Virtue? If you take those most favourably inclined and circumstanced for becoming good, yet their Consciousness of the Changeableness of their Resolutions for Virtue, of the constant weight of Sense, Inclination, Passion, Custom and ill Example; of their
being

being easily surprized in an unguarded Hour, and in a few Moments losing the Ground they had been long gaining; how heartless must it render their Endeavours, in comparison of his who is encouraged by the Promise of the Spirit? Will they not in Prudence decline the noblest Instances of a virtuous Conduct, because difficult to accomplish, and chuse that *Mean* in Religion and Virtue, which is only eligible with regard to external Possessions? Since therefore these Assistances may be so dispensed as to leave room for the Exercise and Increase of a *real Virtue* in us, since human Virtue, and consequently human Happiness, may be thus advanced to the highest Perfection; the Promise of divine Assistances must be allowed a very valuable part of the Christian Revelation, and ought to recommend it to every Man sensible of his Frailty, and of the infinite Excellency and Importance of true Goodness.

VI. The certain Information that the *present* is a *final State of Trial*, and that the Reward given to the *imperfect Virtue* of a *short Life* will be *perfect and everlasting Happiness*, is another glorious Discovery we owe to the Gospel; by revealing which our Saviour approved himself *the Light of the World*, and *the Light of Life*. It was the Opinion of some of the wisest Heathens², 'That tho' this Life was a State of Trial, the Issue was not final. That because the Virtue of the Best here was imperfect, they would not immediately pass into a State of compleat and everlasting Felicity; but be continued on their Trial in another Life, in still more favourable Circumstances for Virtue, and not be fixed unchangeably happy till they had reached Perfection. And that altho' the Wickedness of the Wicked would be punished in the next State, yet none besides the *desperately Wicked* and *absolutely incurable*, even by Pu-

² See Plato's *Phædo*, and Virgil's *Æneid*. B. vi. v. 699, &c.
nishments,

nishments, would be utterly ruined; but that after smarting some time, to bring them to themselves, they would be again tried, tho' in Circumstances less advantageous for their reaching Virtue and Happiness. And perhaps without the Light of Revelation this may be thought the most probable Account of a future State. These Notions, 'tis obvious, may be easily abused by ill disposed Men, for their Encouragement under the Neglect of true Goodness at present, and leave them, with less Reluctance, to follow their Inclinations, when they have the Hope of amending their bad Conduct in a future State, tho' evil Habits, after a-while, render it almost impossible in the present. These Apprehensions of a future State cannot rouse them from their Inattention and vitious Indulgences, like the Belief that the *present is a final State of Trial*, that *now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation*^a. That *'tis appointed for Men once to die, and after Death the Judgment*^b, when we *shall be judged according to what we have done in the Body*^c, and the *Wicked be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord*^d; falling into Misery great as their Crimes, and from which there is no Redemption^e, no Hope of rising again to Virtue and Happiness^f. Tho' under the Gospel, Men believe this Life to be their only Time of Trial, yet how negligent of their eternal Interests, how vitious are the most? How great then would be their Security and Negligence, if they could freely indulge themselves with the Hope, That should they act their Part ill here to the End, they might retrieve all in a following State? Delays to an uncertain Futurity, and the Hope of repenting hereafter, ruin the most now; what then would be the Consequence, if these Hopes were

^a 2 Cor. vi. 2.^d 2 Theff. i. 9.^b Heb. ix. 27.^e Matt. xxv. 46.^c 2 Cor. v. 10.^f Luke xvi. 26.

rendred reasonable by the Belief they were to be tried again in another State?

Let us next consider their Prospect of future Happiness: What a low Encouragement to struggle with contrary Inclinations and Habits, violent Temptations and an opposing World, which necessarily render our Virtue very imperfect, is this Belief, that we shall indeed be more happily situated in a future State, but not arrive at compleat and unchangeable Happiness till, after a long Time, and repeated Trials, we have attained a compleat Virtue? What a low Encouragement is this to Creatures surrounded with so many Difficulties and Temptations, in comparison of the glorious Assurances of the Gospel? That if we approve our selves faithful during this Moment of Trial, if we act well our Part during this short Life, Labour, and Trial, and Danger, and Imperfection shall then be no more; but we shall be confirmed in Holiness and Happiness, never more to be in Danger of sinning or suffering. *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God^g. The Righteous shall go into Life Eternalⁿ. And in the next State, that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part be done awayⁱ. An Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in Heaven for those who are kept by the mighty Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation^k. These divine Encouragements are only to be had from Revelation. Reason could not assure us, that the imperfect Virtue of a Moment should be rewarded with perfect and everlasting Happiness; but would rather direct us to fear the contrary. God is a free Master of his unmerited Favours, and in what degrees he will confer them, can with certainty be learned only from Himself. 'Tis to Jesus therefore, *the Light of Life,**

^g Mat. v. 8.

ⁿ Chap. xxv. 46.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

^k 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

24 CHRIST *the Light of the World.*

we are indebted for the Promise of Glory, Honour, and Immortality, since *Eternal Life is the Gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*¹. How should this endear the Gospel to us, confirm us in the Belief and Profession of it, and excite to an answerable Conduct? How should it animate us to press on to the noblest heights of Piety and Goodness, since our Purity, our Reward, and our Happiness throughout Eternity, will be proportionable to the degrees of Goodness we reach in the present State?

VII. 'Tis to the Gospel alone, or *Christ as the Light of Life*, we owe the Discovery of this important Part of our future Blessedness, that our Struggle with the fleshly Inclinations, and keeping the Body subject to the Mind, shall be rewarded with the Soul's receiving, at the Resurrection, a Body spiritual, glorious, powerful, and immortal; which shall be in a far greater degree subservient to our Holiness and Happiness to Eternity, than it was in its present animal State an Hinderance to both. The Temptations of the *Flesh* are the *most powerful*, with the generality, in the present Life; because its Inclinations are *most violent*, and its Pleasures *most affecting*: They can hardly conceive of any Happiness wherein the Body is not some way interested, are apt to imagine it the most essential Part of their Composition, and sacrifice the calmer, purer Delights of Knowledge, Devotion, Goodness, and Friendship, to the more gross and tumultuous Pleasures of Sense: And this is the Source of most of the Wickedness in the World. What an Advantage is it therefore to the Cause of Virtue, and what an Encouragement to keep under the Body, and to regulate the Gratifications of Sense in a constant Subordination to the Purity, Perfection, and Happiness of the Mind, this Assurance we have from

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

the Gospel, that if we thus mortify our Bodies now, we shall be recompensed in *kind* as well as *degree*; receiving, at the Resurrection, Bodies for ever exempt from all the Infirmities, Sickneses and Sufferings of our present mortal ones, as well as from their irregular Inclinations: Bodies that by the Pleasures of Sight, Harmony, Beauty, and perfect Activity, shall contribute in a far higher degree to the Joy and Perfection of the Mind, than the greatest sensual Enjoyments now do to our Satisfaction^m; or the greatest bodily Sufferings, for the Cause of Religion, to our Uneasinessⁿ? This is an Encouragement which grosser Minds are capable of apprehending, and being influenced by, immortal Health, Beauty and Vigour, the most glorious Scenes to entertain the Sight and Imagination, and celestial Harmony to ravish the Ear. This Doctrine of the Resurrection of our Bodies, free from all their present Evils and Imperfections to Glory, Beauty, and Immortality, is peculiar to the Gospel; human Reason could not discover it, tho' it assents to its Truth on the Declaration and Promise of God, and the sensible Proof of its Certainty and Desirableness in the Resurrection and Glory of our Saviour. The antient Philosophers thought a Resurrection impossible, or undesirable; but herein they erred, not knowing the Scriptures, and the Power of God. God hath expressly promised it to us: He can as easily raise it again as he made it at first; and when it is raised with the glorious Qualities described in the *New Testament*, a Reunion with it will be as advantageous to the Soul, as an everlasting Union with it in its present State would be unhappy. The fifteenth Chapter therefore of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, is of vast more Service to the bulk of Mankind, to animate them against all Difficulties from

^m Rom. viii. 18.ⁿ 2 Cor. iv. 14—18.

the fleshly Principle, and by every Sacrifice to approve their Love to Virtue and Goodness, than Volumes of the Philosophers.

VIII. The separating a Seventh Day for the publick Worship of God, and a more intire Application to the Study and Practice of Religion, is another very valuable Part of the Christian Revelation; by rendring the Knowledge and Obligation of which universal, our Saviour was a *Light to the World*. Reason informs us that God, who is the Author and Preserver of Life, the God of our Time, hath a Right to be immediately honoured, at least, with a Part of it: That publick Worship is a Duty obliging all, being necessary to preserve among Mankind an habitual Conviction of the divine Providence, Government and Right in us, and the Reverence of the Deity; being a fit Acknowledgment that we are *in common* indebted to God, and dependant on Him for innumerable Blessings in Society; and the best Method for pious and reasonable Men, who preserve an habitual Regard and Gratitude to the Deity, to communicate these to others, and thereby promote their Virtue, Perfection and Happiness; the Concern and Duty of all as reasonable, social and benevolent Beings, and the common Offspring of God. And if publick Worship be a Duty, 'tis necessary there be a Time fixed for it, in order to the joint Performance. And Reason, if attended to, will farther instruct us, that Beings capable of Virtue, Devotion, and intellectual Pleasure, inclosed in Bodies of Flesh, and situated in a World filled with sensual Amusements, Diversions and Temptations, by which the Mind is greatly hindred from applying to its proper Employments and Pleasures, those great Truths and Duties which are its Perfection and Happiness, Reason will instruct us that such Beings, besides an habitual Regard to the Deity in their general Conduct, and the daily Exercises of Devotion

tion which support and express it, should at proper Seasons *retreat farther* from the Amusements, Distractions, and Cares of the World, in order to revive and fix deeper the Impressions of the great Principles, Rules and Motives of Piety and Virtue, and to dispose the Mind for the Enjoyment of a spiritual Happiness in a future State; to lessen the Influence of this World, and make an habitual Piety and Virtue more easy and practicable. So far Reason speaks clearly, for, informing us the End is necessary to be attained, it obliges to use the Means best subservient to it; but then, what that Proportion of Time exactly is, which is best for answering these Ends, Reason cannot readily decide, much less with such a Clearness and Certainty, as should oblige and determine all to comply, which yet is necessary for the full Beauty and Order of publick social Worship; for engaging the most Inconsiderate and Stupid to attend it for their Improvement, and to prevent that Disturbance and Confusion which would arise, from one Part of the Society being wholly engaged in worldly Pursuits, while the other was employed in the Worship of the Deity. On these Accounts, it appears worthy the divine Wisdom to appoint that Proportion of Time it saw best fitted to answer the Purposes of Religion, a Proportion that would not break in on the necessary Cares and Labours of Life, nor yet return so seldom as in a manner to lose its Efficacy, and leave Mankind under the Dominion of the Cares and Pleasures of the bodily Life. Besides, the divine Goodness might incline Him to such an Appointment, in Compassion to the poorer and more dependant Part of Mankind, and to the Beasts our Servants, whose hard or covetous Masters might not otherwise, in innumerable Cases, allow them proper Ease and Refreshment. From the Beginning of the World therefore, God set apart a Seventh Day for this End^o,

^o Gen. ii. 2, and 3.

whereon ceasing from the laborious Employments of Life, and from Cares and Pursuits merely animal, we should employ our selves in the Contemplation and Acknowledgments of his Perfections and Works who created us and the World, is our Preserver and constant Benefactor, and our absolute Proprietor ; whose Will is our Law, his Favour our Happiness, who can only be pleased by an Imitation of his Perfections, by real Virtue and Goodness, and who will most bountifully reward, in a future Life, those Dispositions and their proper Fruits. This Institution was as early as the first Man, as we learn from the History of *Genesis*, and the Remains of antient History and Customs among the Heathen confirm this Account of *Moses*. For among all, even the most barbarous Nations, they paid a particular regard to the Seventh Day (tho' in time they seem to have forgotten the Reason of the Institution) and as a Consequence generally divided their Time by Weeks. This Command was renewed to the *Israelites* in the Desert^a, and a great Strictness farther enjoined, in abstaining from every kind of Work, in Memory of their Deliverance from the servile Labours and Bondage of *Egypt*. But setting aside this peculiar Reason, and what was added to the Command on account of it, the *general Reason*, and *original Appointment* still oblige all ; together with the Command of Christ signified by his Apostles, who, to add to the Commemoration of the Works of Creation and Providence, the Commemoration of our Redemption by Christ, and preserve the Conviction of the most glorious Evidence of our Religion and Assurance of Immortality, the Resurrection of Jesus^c, changed the Seventh Day for the First^s, which is also thought by Learned Men

^p See *Grot. de Veritate*, &c. l. i. c. 16.

^q *Exod.* xx. 8. *Deut.* v. 15. ^r *Acts* xx. 7. *1 Cor.* xvi. 2. *Rev.* i. 10.

^s *V. Justin. Mart. Apol.* ii. p. 98. *Cypr. Epist.* xxxiii. *Tertull. Apol.* c. xvi. and *Ignat. Epist. ad Magnes*, p. 35.

to have been the Day held sacred from the Beginning of the World, till the giving that Law afresh in the Wilderness ^t. No one who hath a just Sense of Religion, and Concern for his own Virtue, Perfection and Happiness, and the Virtue and Happiness of others, can doubt the Wisdom and Goodness of this Appointment; and every such Person will be taught, both from Reason and Revelation, his Obligation to employ this Day in the manner that may best answer the Ends of its Separation; will, by his Attendance, Influence, and the like, encourage publick Worship, to spread among others a Sense of Religion, as well as cherish it in himself: and so employ his Retirement as may best revive and confirm good Dispositions; raise him farthest above the Attraction of the present World, and the Hindrances of Virtue, and most strongly impress his Mind with an approaching Eternity, and temper his Soul to its Happiness. In short, he will see his Obligations to improve the Day to the Purposes of Religion, with a Diligence and Fidelity becoming one who knows his Stay in this Life is very short; his Interests, in a future State infinite; and, that his only important Concern in the present Life is, to cultivate those pious and virtuous Dispositions which prepare him for the refined Pleasures of Immortality, and intitle him to the Possession of them in the fullest Degree. Had Men been left to fix this Proportion of Time, Superstition, in some few, might have incroached too far on the necessary Business of Life; and, with the greater Part, Indifference to Religion, Earthliness, or Sensuality, have prevailed to allow a Portion much too small. No one can say a Seventh is too large; and God having fixed on this, his Authority is sufficient to decide the Point with all who have a just Sense of the Deity, and their Obligations to

^t *Vide Patrick on Exod. c. xvi. v. 5.*

Him, and a suitable Value for his Favour, and for that Happiness in the Perfection of Devotion and Goodness to which He designs to raise them.

IX. The *positive Institution* of the Christian Religion; viz. BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER, are worthy the Wisdom and Goodness of God, tend to cherish real Piety and Virtue, and are fit to be enjoined by him who stiled himself *the Light of the World*. By some *sensible* publick Actions to declare our *inward* Conviction of Religion to the Honour of God, and the Edification of Men, and by some publick Rites, at set Seasons, to preserve the Memory of *great Transactions*, which have a Tendency, when remembered, to excite and confirm our Piety and Virtue, is certainly a proper and reasonable Part of Religion. And as Mankind are more affected with sensible Things, than Things merely rational and spiritual, to make use of sensible Rites so far as they are adapted to *help* this *Weakness*, and *remove* it, *not* to *strengthen* the Prejudice, and *increase* the Dominion of Sense, is certainly a Method worthy of God. It hath been the weak side of Mankind in all Ages, to incline too much to these Rites; and their Religion hath, for the most part, been made up of mere outside Ceremonies, and pompous or superstitious Services, which they have placed in the room of inward genuine Piety, and real Goodness; the greater Ease in performing some of these, or their agreeably amusing the Senses, exerting more powerfully a sensible warmth in Religion, or their being consistent with the full Indulgence of favourite Passions. These, and some other Reasons, have caused the Herd of Mankind readily to run into them, with the neglect or gross Corruption of true Religion: so strong, and general, and fixed, was this Bias in Mankind, that in Condescension to this State of the World, and the Weakness of the *Israelites*, whom otherwise the pompous Worship of
their

their idolatrous Neighbours, would have seduced to *their* Idolatry, God saw it necessary to enjoin them numerous pompous Ceremonies and bodily Services, which *in themselves were not good*, and to which nothing but the Circumstances of the World, at that Time, and the Necessity of this Method, for accomplishing more valuable Ends, (the maintaining the Knowledge of the true God and true Religion in the World) could have reconciled him. 'Tis our Happiness under the Gospel, that our Religion consists of Actions in themselves reasonable and excellent, conducive immediately to the Perfection of our Nature, the present Happiness of Men, or the enlarging our Capacities for future Blessedness. The *positive* Institutions of Christianity are few, but two properly such, and these plain and simple, no way tending to encourage Superstition; and adapted to put us in continual Remembrance of our Obligations to real Goodness.

As for the SACRAMENT of BAPTISM, wherein, by being washed with Water in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit^v, the baptized Person solemnly gives up himself to God through his Son, to be governed by the Gospel he taught, in Expectation of the Aids of that Spirit, whose miraculous Gifts proved the Truth of the Gospel; and obliges himself to forsake all his former Impurities, which he thus acknowledges^w; while at the same time, by this Rite, he is encouraged to hope for God's pardoning Mercy through Christ, and the cleansing Influences of the Spirit, 'tis certainly a suitable and reasonable Institution. Is it not fit a Person coming over from false Religions, or vicious Practices, should publickly renounce them; and with Seriousness and Solemnity oblige himself to

^v Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. 1 Pet. iii. 21. and following.

^w Rom. vi. 2,

Newness of Life? And is not this Rite very expressive of this, well adapted to remind Him of the Necessity of inward Purity, and very encouraging also, since, as administered by the Appointment, and by the Servant of God, 'tis a Pledge to him of God's pardoning Mercy and sanctifying Spirit, if he comes to it with the proper Dispositions^x.

As to the Baptizing the Children of Christian Parents in their Infancy; 'tis an Action *in it self reasonable and fit*, that Parents should dedicate their Children to God, the Former of their Bodies, and the Father of their Spirits, in Acknowledgment they have received them from Him, and solemnly oblige themselves to endeavour the Training them up in a religious and virtuous Life. And 'tis a great *Encouragement* to them, that God will accept the Dedication, and by the Influences of his Spirit bless and succeed their Endeavours^y: All which is fitly expressed by this external Rite.

The Wisdom of the other positive Institution, the Lord's Supper, is also easily shewn. It was in it self *reasonable*, and highly expedient for valuable Ends which are served by it, that so great a Transaction as the Death of the Son of God, should be kept in constant lively Remembrance. The breaking the Bread, and pouring out the Wine^z, help us more strongly to apprehend his Sufferings, from his broken Body and streaming Blood; and the frequent Eating and Drinking after this Manner, in Memory of his Death, tend to excite and confirm our Faith in his Gospel He thus attested; our Love and Gratitude to God and the Redeemer; our Abhorrence of Sin, which he died to put away; a just Contempt of the World, its Honours or Pleasures in comparison of the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind, a

^x Acts ii. 38. Titus iii. 5.
xvi. 15, 33.

^z Matt. xxvi. 26, &c.

^y Mark x. 13—16. Acts

servent Love to each other for whom the same common Saviour died; a Concern to press on to the Perfection of Holiness, and reach Heights of it worthy the Expence of his Death; and the like. This Action is so well adapted to serve all these Purposes, that it can *hardly* be called a *mere positive* Institution; and these are of so great Importance in the divine Life, as to evidence it a most wise and gracious Institution of our Saviour. While therefore we admire his Wisdom and Goodness, in releasing us from the Bondage of *Jewish* Ceremonies, and bodily Observances; which could not perfect the Worshipers, as pertaining to the Conscience, and directing us to give our main Concern to the important Duties of *the Love of God, and our Neighbour*, and the like; we have Reason also to be thankful for those positive Institutions so well adapted for answering these Ends; the solemn Profession of Christianity, and taking on our selves, with proper Encouragements, the Obligations to a good Life, or the calling to our lively Remembrance the great Motives to a continual Progress in Holiness, which the Example, Sufferings, and dying Love of the Redeemer, exhibit.

X. The Institution of the Ministry; or an Order of Men whose peculiar Business it is to perform, in the best manner, the publick Offices of Religion; to study, more thoroughly, its great Truths and Rules; to represent them in the clearest and most affecting Light to others, and continually excite them to believe and practise accordingly, is a wise and excellent Part of the Christian Revelation, and by this Jesus provided for enlightning the *World throughout all Generations*^b. The Advantage of this Institution is so evident, that I need say little to illustrate it. If publick Worship be a Duty, there

^a Matt. xxii. 37.

^b Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. 2 Tim. ii. 2:

must be some Persons appointed to perform the publick Parts of it; and as the performing these in the best manner, is of great Importance to the Purposes of Religion, and requires Prudence, Care, and Study; 'tis fit Persons be chosen, whose Business it should be to qualify themselves for it. Farther: Such are the Circumstances of Mankind; their Ignorance, Inattention, Prejudices, Engagement in worldly Affairs, corrupt Passions, and the like, as render it highly expedient and necessary there be an Order of Men qualified for the Work, who should devote themselves to it; to instruct their Ignorance, help their Weakness, oppose their Corruptions, rouse their Attention to their Duty, and assist and encourage them to the Practice. And had the Ministers of the Gospel, generally taken Care to be duly qualified for their proper Employment, kept close to it, and diligently discharged it, their greatest Enemies must have esteemed them, and owned the Usefulness of their Office. And it is easie to observe, that all the Clamours against them bear wholly, either on their Unfitness for their Work, their departing from the Design of their Institution, or neglecting it; or else assuming a Power Christ never gave them, to lord it over the Faith and Consciences of the People, and making Use of the venerable Name of Religion to serve their Views of Ambition, Covetousness, or Sensuality. But these are Men the Gospel disowns, and whom no Christian is concerned to vindicate. 'Tis only an Order of *faithful Men, fit to teach others*; and Examples to the Believers, in *Humility, Temperance, Meekness, Fidelity, Goodness, Charity and Purity*, and Imitators of their divine Master^c; that we contend for, as appointed by Christ. In the Ages of Heathenism,

^c Tit. i. 6, &c. 1 Tim. iii. 1, &c. iv. 12.

the Priests wholly neglected Morality and true Religion, and only taught the People Superstition, and such Observances as supported their Power and increased their Riches^d. The Philosophers indeed taught Virtue, some of them, but then at most they were but few in number^e; separated Virtue from Religion; wanted Authority supported by Miracles, to establish their Philosophy in the World; had but few Hearers, a select Number of Friends and Admirers, and by allowing and recommending Conformity to the Religion established^f, left the Bulk of Mankind, under the Power of Idolatry, Superstition, and Priestcraft, as ignorant and vicious as ever; it was therefore wisely ordered by our Saviour, that his Followers should not only statedly assemble, for the Profession of his Religion, and the publick Worship of God in his Name; but that there should be in every Church or Christian Assembly, one, at least, whose Office it was to study Religion more exactly, and to instruct and exhort others. For tho' every Man is bound, according to his Leisure and Abilities, to study Religion, and in his Station to promote the Knowledge and Practice of it among others, yet this would not supply the Neglect of that thoro' Study, exact Knowledge, and constant Instruction and Persuasion by particular Persons, which are so necessary to the Support and Progress of true Religion. If this were left unassigned to proper Persons, what was every ones Business, would as usually be neg-

^d See *Lactant. Instit. Div.* l. iv. c. 3.

^e *Aristotle*, particularly, in his *Ethics ad Nicom.* takes no notice of a God and a Providence, and the Duties owing to the Deity, and never inforces the Practice of Virtue by mentioning the Approbation, Favour, and Rewards of the Deity, throughout that Sylltem.

^f *Socrates* did so. See *Xenop. de Mem.* l. iv. c. 3. § xvi. & c. vi. § ii. *Et Cicero de Legg.* l. ii. Sect. xvi. & lxxx.

lected by every one. In all others Sciences, Teachers have been found highly necessary to a tolerable degree of Knowledge; and 'tis apparent, that the Knowledge and Virtue now subsisting in the Christian World, are very much owing to the faithful and honest Part of the Ministers of the Gospel; as the Guilt of most of the Corruptions and Superstitions now prevailing, must be owned to lie heavy on the wicked Part of them; who have neglected or gone off from the great Ends of their Office, and prostituted Religion, in it self the most sacred Thing, to their own worldly Interests, or the Vices of Mankind: and who, therefore, deserve to be disowned by all reasonable and honest Men, as much as the other to be encouraged. *Julian*, the most crafty Opposer of Christianity, was so sensible of the Usefulness of this Order^s, for spreading the Knowledge and Practice of Christianity, that among his other Efforts to revive Paganism, he appointed Philosophers in all the considerable Towns, skilled both in the *Gentile* Religion, and Philosophy, for the publick Instruction of the People. But it would be an Affront to the Understanding of an Audience, if I mention more Arguments to prove, that a wise and faithful Instructor and Friend, and a good Example, are of great Advantage in the Study and Practice of Religion and Virtue.

I will here end the Proof, that *Christ was the Light of the World*; having shewn, in several important Instances, that besides the Doctrines and Precepts of natural Religion, which are a great Part of Christianity, the additional Doctrines, Precepts, and Institutions of the Gospel, are worthy of God, suited to the Necessities of Mankind, and

³ *Vide Sozomen. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 16.*

greatly conducive to promote true Religion and Virtue in the World. To the Instances mentioned I might have added others: As the Account of the Creation and Deluge; the History of God's Providence and general Government, and of his particular Dispensations to private Families and Persons; the Examples of eminent Piety and Virtue recorded in Scripture for our Imitation, and of the contrary, for our Warning; the perfect Beauty of Religion and Virtue in the Life of Christ; the Obligations and Encouragements from the Dignity, Condescension, Example, Resignation, Piety and Love of the Son of God, and from his Exaltation and Government of the World, the Reward of his perfect Obedience, to imitate him as nearly as possible; the distinct Account of the awful Transactions of the Last Day, and the rational and inviting Descriptions of the Employments and Happiness of Heaven, and the like: But I omit them, to prevent running out to too great a Length. Let me now ask, what we can desire more to constitute a Revelation, credible and worthy of God, than that it contain all these moral Truths, which the most impartial, diligent, and able Reasoners could trace out, and which are of general Concernment, with the Addition of those noble Truths, or wise Institutions which may best revive, support, or advance true Religion in the World, and which human Reason could not discover; and place all in an easie familiar Light, for the Instruction even of the meanest? What less than divine Wisdom and Goodness, could thus assist and bless erring Mortals? How readily should we embrace, how heartily espouse, and how stedfastly abide by this Religion, when the external Proofs that it came from God, are also as great as its internal Excellency?

I shall now conclude this Subject with two or three Reflections.

1. Hence we may learn, what a *perfect Agreement* there is between *Reason* and *Faith*. Some have foolishly, and others wickedly, opposed these to each other; and imagined they magnified their Faith, and rendred it more meritorious, by a Readiness to believe Doctrines contrary to Reason; which, instead of being an acceptable Homage to God, is an Action fit only for mad Men. True Christianity, you have seen, is perfectly agreeable to Reason; its Doctrines are all worthy of God, and perfective of human Nature; and tho' some of them could not be discovered by Reason, and others cannot be fully comprehended by it, yet none of them contradict it. Reason is the Gift of God, and to degrade that, is to reproach the Giver. 'Tis the Voice of God, as well as Revelation, and God cannot contradict Himself. 'Tis on the Testimony of Reason to the moral Perfections and Providence of God, we believe Revelation; because Reason tells us, there is an infinitely wise, holy and good God, our Creator and Governor, who would not deceive us Himself, nor suffer us to be necessarily deceived in Matters of the greatest Importance. Now if any Revelation pretended to be divine, contradicted the evident Dictates of Reason, and told us they were not to be relied on, it would destroy the very Testimony on which we were to believe it, and leave us no Principle to build the Faith of it upon. As therefore true Christianity must be intirely agreeable to right Reason, and hath been at large proved such, if any Persons attempt to bring us over to their Sentiments, by declaiming against Reason, to exalt, as they pretend, Faith; the only Use we should make of it, is to conclude, that they have

got an unreasonable Faith of their own, and grossly mistake the Christian Doctrine, not that Christianity it self is unreasonable. Nonsense and Contradiction are no more justly venerable in Religion than in common Life; but the more solemn the more contemptible. *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, is commended for that he reasoned away the seeming Contradiction in the divine Revelation^h, before he acted upon it. *And Religion*, says St. *Paul*, is a reasonable Serviceⁱ; and indeed, were it unreasonable, it would not be fitly required by a wise God, from Creatures whom he had made reasonable.

2. How thankful should we be to God, that Christ, *the Light of the World*, hath shone upon us, and how firm in our Adherence to his Authority and Guidance? Holiness and Goodness are the Perfection and Happiness of reasonable Beings; every Advantage therefore, for improving these, especially such peculiar Advantages as we have by the Gospel, must be in the highest Degree valuable, both in regard to present and future Happiness. The more perfect our Piety and Virtue, the nobler our Pleasures at present, arising from Veneration, Love, and Confidence in God, and a Sense of his Favour; from conscious Goodness, from a calm and security of Mind Proof against all external Assaults; from well-governed Passions; from the successful Prosecution of the most valuable Designs, those of our own immortal Perfection and Happiness, and of others; and from Hopes still Bright'ning of eternal Glory and Blessedness; and as the present Pleasures will be noble, so the larger our Interest in the divine Favour, and the Happiness of Eternity. A most wise and holy God cannot but approve, and make us happy in proportion to our Resemblance

^h λογισμενος. Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

ⁱ Rom. xii. 1.

of Himself in Holiness and Goodness. How advantageous therefore, for a rational fervent Piety, the satisfying Account the Gospel gives of Evil, moral and natural; the wise Reasons of their Permission, and the greater Good and Happiness that will result from it to all the sincerely Good? and, how well adapted to inspire us with a cheerful Confidence in God, who brings Good out of Evil; and to animate us to approve our Virtue, and increase our Happiness, by surmounting Difficulties and Temptations under the View and Approbation of a most tender Parent, and gracious Sovereign? What better fitted, than the Assurance of a particular Providence, to raise us above every Temptation to Vice, and leave us nothing to be concerned for but to do our Duty, please God, and practise Goodness? What more proper to lead us to Repentance, and encourage us to exert our selves amidst a Sense of our past Sins, and the Frailty of our State, than the Assurance of a full Remission for the past, and divine Assistance for the future? And what better way to prevent our abusing those Favours to an Occasion of Sin, than granting them through the Death of Christ, our Sacrifice? What stronger, what nobler Inducement to act our Part well, and improve the present Life in the best manner, than the Assurance that this is a final State of Trial, and that the Reward of the approved Virtue of a short Life will be a Happiness divine and everlasting? How glorious the Encouragement, to mortify the irregular Inclinations of the fleshly Part, the Promise of raising our Bodies glorious, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal? and how well adapted to keep these great Truths in view, and engage us to the Remembrance and Practice of Virtues, essential to our immortal Perfection and Happiness, the Institution of the Sacraments, the Lord's Day, and the Ministry? What greater
Proofs

Proofs of the Divinity of his Doctrine could Jesus give, than revealing Truths, and establishing Institutions so perfective of our Natures, and assistant to our Virtue and Happiness? Could any other Religion furnish more useful and important Truths, and attended with stronger external Evidences of being divinely revealed, we might do well in quitting the Gospel, and cleaving to that: But if no such Religion can be found, we shall act most unreasonably, if we forsake the Belief and Obedience of the Gospel, unless it could be reasonable to forsake an unerring Guide to eternal Happiness; or we could reasonably prefer any other Interest or Pursuit before true Goodness, the Favour of the Almighty, and unchangeable everlasting Blessedness. Let us then, with the warmest Gratitude, own our Obligations to God for ordering our Birth and Education in a Land blessed with the pure Beams of the Gospel, and more diligently study its noble Discoveries and excellent Precepts; and this will necessarily lead us to the closest Adherence to it. To conclude.

3. Let us endeavour to reach Heights of Piety and Goodness worthy the peculiar Advantages we enjoy by the Gospel. Every Advantage for superior Attainments in Religion, carries with it an Obligation to a suitable Improvement, and to *whom God hath given much*, of them He will ask the more^k. God, who knows the Value of these Advantages, and their Improveableness, cannot but be displeased with us if we neglect to improve them. Every degree of Vice will be rendered more criminal by the clearer Light our Duty is set in, and the more amiable Representations of Religion, and the mightier Encouragements to Goodness we are blessed withal. Instead therefore of valuing our selves

^k Luke xii. 48,

barely on having those Advantages, and condemning the less happy Heathen who want them; let us endeavour to act up to them. Let us bear the Evils of Life with a Fortitude and Resignation becoming those who are assured they are designed for our Good, and will, rightly improved, issue in our greatest Happiness in a future State, and answerably improve them. Let us struggle against the Violence of our Inclinations and Passions with that Chearfulness, Resolution, and Constancy, which become Persons who know, they were permitted as Trials of our Virtue; and that by overcoming them, we shall heighen our Virtue, its Acceptance with God, and our Glory and Happiness to Eternity. Let us make Religion the great Concern of Life, and doing Good our chief Employment; like Men assured, that *if they seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, all other Things will be added unto them*¹. Let God's pardoning Mercy manifested through Christ, lead us to Repentance, and produce an irreconcilable Abhorrence of Vice, which caused the Death of the Son of God. Let the Promise of divine Assistance engage us to exert our selves to the utmost, and to reach degrees of Goodness worthy such an Assistant and Conductor. Let us not lazily plead Impotence, and decline our Duty, when God promises his Grace shall be sufficient for us^m. Let our Knowledge, that the present is a final State of Trial, determine us, in this our Day, to mind the Things that relate to our everlasting Peace, *before they are for ever hid from our Eyes*. And let us improve all the Helps we enjoy from the LORD'S DAY, the SACRAMENT, and the *Ministry*, like Persons who must shortly account for these,

¹ Matt. vi. 33.^m 2 Cor. xii. 9.

and who know the best Improvement of them, will procure the largest Possession of a Felicity divine and everlasting; that the Glory and Beauty of our Bodies at the Resurrection, the Perfection of our Minds and our Happiness, in the immediate Presence of God and of his Son, and in the Society of Angels and Saints, will be proportioned to the Fervour of our Piety, our Activity in doing Good, Command of our Passions, and Abstinence from every Instance of Wickedness while on our Trial. Let us be *stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; for as much as we know our Labour is not in vain in the Lord*ⁿ.

ⁿ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

F I N I S.



BOOKS Printed for RICHARD HETT, and
JOHN GRAY.

I. **A** Dialogue on Devotion, after the Manner of *Xenophon*: In which the Reasonableness, Pleasure, and Advantages of it, are considered. To which is prefixed, *A Conversation of Socrates, on the Being and Providence of God*. Translated from the Greek. By *Thomas Amory*.

II. Queries proposed to the Consideration of all such as think it an Injury to Religion to shew the Reasonableness of it. By a sincere Friend to Reason and Revelation.

III. A Discourse concerning the Nature of Christ's Kingdom; chiefly designed against the Corruptions and Usurpations of the Church of *Rome*. Preached to an Assembly of Ministers at *Sherborne*, in *Dorsetshire*, April 8. 1735; and published at their Request. By *Henry Grove*.

IV. The Evidence for our Saviour's Resurrection considered; with the Improvement of that important Doctrine. Price 1 s.

V. Some Thoughts concerning the Proofs of a Future State from Reason. Price 2 s.

These three last by Henry Grove.

VI. The Assemblies Catechism revised and render'd fitter for general Use. Price 6 d.

VII. A sober and charitable Disquisition on the Importance of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, particularly with Regard to *Worship* and the Doctrine of *Satisfaction*. By *Simon Browne*. Price 1 s.

VIII. An Account of the Conference held in *Nicholas-Lane*, Feb. 13. 1734-5, between two *Romish* Priests and some Protestant Divines. By *Samuel Chandler*. Price 1 s.

IX. The Excellency and Advantage of the Gospel Dispensation, compared with the *Law of Moses*, the *Light of Nature*, the *Inventions of Men*, and the *Dominion of Sin*. By *Robert Emms*. Price 1 s.

X. The Argument from Prophecy, in Proof that Jesus is the *Messiah*, vindicated; or, Some Considerations on the Prophecies of the *Old Testament* as the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion. Price 1 s. 6 d.